



THE BEST
Improvement and Consolation
UNDER
SOUTH-SEA Calamity,
And Fears of the
PESTILENCE.



Religious
and

Improvement

Society

And

P E S

By E. M.
Lectures

Printed for
Ship in
near the
1721.

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A
Religious Consideration of the *Pursuits*,
and *Possessions* of this World

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Improvement and *Consolation*

UNDER

SOUTH-SEA Calamity ;

And that which we are *afraid* of from the

PESTILENCE.

By ELISHA SMITH, M.A.

Lecturer of *Wisbech* in the Isle of *Ely*.

L O N D O N :

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1721.

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THE P R E F A C E.



SINCE our Text of *H.* Scripture has arrived in this Nation for directing the way to Heaven, we Divines perhaps never had such a Harvest of experienc'd Indignation, and Outcry at the Vicissitude of this World, and the Deceitfulness of its Riches, as now before us both at Home, and Abroad; for exerting the best Efforts of our Calling in that good and great design of so opportunely withdrawing the Hearts of many, from the vexatious abusive ways of increasing Wealth, to place and compose them upon better Treasures; shewing multitudes how they may *P.*rovidentially enrich Themselves by their misfortunes, by commutating them into the much better Success of being Rich towards God.

The PREFACE.

WHAT is now made Public in hopes of some Impression that way for good, as it is now full Time for the first Resentments to abate and give place to Second Thoughts; was Preacht at Wisbech at twice, soon after the beginning of Sorrow for South-Sea Distresters; and the Proclamation for a general Fast upon Apprehension of the Plague. At Westminster-Abbey 4 Dec. 1720. both Parts were run into one, as the Time would give leave. At Lyn Regis in Norfolk 7 May 1721. the first Part only with the Seasonable Additions within the [].

I WAITED thus long expecting to be agreeably prevented by some Performances of able Pens. If there are any which I have not seen, Where so many Endeavours are wanting, this can't be superfluous. If none extant, there is the more need of this; at least to excite more, and better. May GOD prosper its good Design.



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2 COR. IV. 10.

— *The Things which are seen are Temporal; but the Things which are not seen are Eternal.*



HO' the Words, in their Context, are address'd to the Consideration of suffering Christians, as a seasonable Cordial to support their Patience under the Adversities of Life; they are equally applicable to the prosperous Side of all human Affairs (especially since the Losses of the World affect those most, who are most addicted to its Desires) that they are, and ever must be *Temporal*, and of short Continuance, and cannot escape the unavoidable Doom of Vanity and Vexation. Thus the Holy Scriptures every where inscribe, and remark them to the serious Reflection, and best profiting of all that have them, and all that hope for them; as all that run may read. *The Things that are seen*, in your own Hands, or others, consider'd as Loss or Gain, in High, Middle, or Low Estate of Life, are confessedly transient, of one World and Condition only; are of no Duration in respect of *us*, who are by Nature Constituted for two Scenes, and States of Things; one Here, one Hereafter; one *Temporal*, which is *seen*, the other *Eternal*, which is *not seen*. For this Cause both

B

Adversity

Adversity and Prosperity, with all their attendant Sorrows, Fears, or Joys ; as well the seeking as missing, the keeping or quitting the former, which we all pass thro' in our Passage thro' this World, are ordain'd to be connected with, and referr'd to our Gain, or Loss of the latter : That chief Scene, which most imports us, and must come upon us,

How good and right is it therefore, That in Considerations drawn from the Nature of those Things, and from ourselves, and from the *present* Times, they be weigh'd together, and a proper Estimate made of each, by all concern'd in both, *viz.* every Body? That all mortal Schemes for present Things may be better modell'd and mended, and all the Human Passions so busy about them more rationally moderated, and at this Season, religiously condol'd, and conducted by Regards to the future Things of an everlasting Life. Things infinitely more pertaining to Men, who have Minds by native Conclusion half-replenish'd with a Belief of a future State ; to Christians most especially, who from the Grace and Light of the Gospel have full Assurance, as sure as any Thing in this Life present, of the two Futurities hereafter. Thus ought Reason, and thus might the Heavenly, Christian Religion bear forth more Fruit, in meliorating the Injoyments of all Things here below ; that being rooted and grounded in *that* Wisdom, we may in all Stages of Life, habitually live and grow up to Things Above. And what is that? But as Christians, and Right-reasoners, whilst we live here, to live, *indeed*, to the Ends, for which we are *Here* plac'd to live, the Glory of God ; the Good of others ; and the Salvation of our Souls.

For what is the Value, or Joy of Life? but as it passeth away in the Faculty of making happy, in this World, and that which is to come. For the accomplishing this very Thing, Reason and Christianity have made an Alliance together, and invite all to come into it, and those that are enter'd are only press'd to persevere in the Tenour of it, *i. e.* the certain Path to Happiness. But since the Generality actually perverticate, have a Religion only for this World, and not for the next ; usually seeking their Rest in the incompetent *Things that are seen*, and finding none, where none is to be found ; they must needs be per-

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perpetual Fugitives from it; effectually unhappy in this Life; and much more so in the next! Wretched Search of Felicity by halves, or rather by scraps and broken pieces! Always deceiving, yet endless in fresh Pursuits; the Result whereof, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; new Vanity, and repeated Vexation. And whereas abundance of the *Christian* Name thro' insufficient Application of their Faith in the better Things they have learnt, neither positing their Judgment, nor refreshing their Memory enough with the right Conduct, most wise and happy making Sentiments of the *Text*, sadly squander away all their Endeavours after Happiness; they spoil their good *Creed*; they spend their Days in a vain Shadow, entangling and bewildring themselves in continual Error about the Substance: And full of unavailing Hurry, so'lemnly fool away the End of their Being; and go off this Course of Things undone Losers of their great Stake; and all for present Trifles, Phantoms, and comparative Nothings.

AND since this was the chosen Theme of Royal, and of other inspir'd Preaching in both *Testaments*; and is ever useful (now more especially) in that which is the common Rehearsal of the other, I beseech you give me leave also to endeavour your true Happiness; in setting before your View the *Worth* of Things: Which should be to you, and all other worthy People, the Rule and Measure of beginning, continuing, and ending every Care, and Action. For this I only have to desire, Not to take any Thing upon Trust, from me; but believe *GOD*, believe only in the *Nature* of Things; or if there is any more credible Judge in the World, it is *Yourselves* qualify'd with your *own Experience*. To that I appeal, by that let me be heard, who desire to convince you by certain Knowledge, *i. e.* your own Convictions: Whilst I draw some Reflections upon, and Comparisons between the Nature of *Temporal* and *Eternal Things*, interchangeably consider'd in their usual Qualities, and Conditions.

I. OF being *Pursu'd*.

II. OF being *Possess'd*.

B 2

Now,

Now, if it is past all Doubt, that preference in Worth ought to conduct every means and measure of Pursuit; if it is also our general Belief, That eternal Things are more esteemable than temporal; what is the interposing Charm in particular? (that Beam in most Eyes, that Mote in almost all) which so often carries away Body and Soul, as we too well know, to the preference of the latter before the former. Is it all circumscrib'd in that one Value, *viz.* one is PRESENT, and therefore great; the other *future*, and therefore so little. But it is the beginning of Wisdom that we can, and may be so easily rescu'd from that general Captivity, and immediately set right; only by stating the Case right, as it is here in the *Text*. Considering in just Ballance of Abatement; tho' the Things seen are present, that, at the same Hour, the utmost Uncertainty, together with most afflicting Deceitfulness; and at the very best, a short Duration with a long Train of Dissatisfactions accompanying, are *likewise present* with them. None can deny that to be the very Case: I had almost said, Is there any living, who has not felt it? That it is so, is the general Voice of GOD, and Man: Ought not therefore that *conscious* Thought to be *now*, and always present? For returning the true Estimate to our Minds, and reinstating them what they are in themselves, *temporal Things*; liable to all the Changes and Chances, Disappointments and Disasters, which Time and our mortal Life, the great Alterers of human Affairs, can produce. And therefore despicable and not to be *look'd upon*. Whether the prosperous or adverse Side, in comparison of the *Eternals*, which are not *seen*: But are nevertheless with equal Certainty known to be free and disingag'd from every thing of that Nature; which depreciates the other, and so very feelingly molests our Passions, and Projects in endeavouring so much, and all in vain, to find the Quiescence and Happiness of our Mind in them.

LET us therefore, if you please, consider one and t'other.

I. IN a State of Pursuit.

WITH respect to those who repose their prime Happiness in them, is there not still lacking to their present

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present Store that ever absent *somewhat*, which distances the full Enjoyment, and mutilates the Satisfaction in some Degree or other of not being *wholly* content? 'Tis in that they therefore place the future Incomes of *entire* Felicity: 'Tis that which stirs up the eager Mind, and pushes on, and on the Spirit of *Pursuit* (which is always observ'd to have more Alacrity and Delight to the Thing chased and unknown, than for the self-same possess'd :) For that they luxuriate in Wishes, and abound in *Schemes*: Often contriving lest one fail, two Strings to their Bow: They spare no Pains to court all probable Methods and Persons; and have the Policy to co-operate even with what they otherwise heartily despise: Secret in their true Designs: Wary whom they trust; and no less intent upon seizing every Juncture, and adapting every Means for Success. Thus they feed and flatter their ill-imagined Project for Happiness. Not compounded, as in the mean Time, it ought to be, of the contentable Desires of Nature, and the easy Possession of the good Things which adequately answer them; especially taking into Mind another World, and a Soul to be saved from this State of Patience, and Imperfection; but mostly made up of what in truth is foreign to the Business, the fantastic Notions and Opinions that are in the World; which therefore renders the Enjoyment so absolutely various and continually dissipated. Nor can it be otherwise, as long as the Cause whereon it depends is so itself. Thus they get for their Pains, from Day to Day, and Year to Year, What? Instead of the Solidity of Happiness, the Vanity, and the very jest of it.

FOR are their Expectations ever answer'd to their Mind? No; it shall be proved, they are only vain in promising themselves Success; and witty against themselves in contriving their own Discontents, one after another. For it is as many to one against them whether they shall succeed or not, notwithstanding all their Address, or Opportunities, as there are Opponents, and Accidents that can hinder. Yea, what Agues from Jealousy of Rivals, and Fears of Disappointment go Partners with the unwearied Steps, which leave no Stone unturn'd for carrying the Point! Hope defer'd sickens by Intervals the Natural Rest by Night is disturb'd,

sturb'd, and that but increases the Day-Dreams, and the Unmindfulness of other Things left unsettled, purely because this is still in Suspence. The Health of both Mind, and Body, whose every Part sacrific'd something to the labour'd Event, droops under the Load of Cares about the Means, and Anxieties about the End. Improvident Method! Thus to adjourn and dismiss *the Bird in the Hand, for that in the Bush*. But how embitter'd must that Disappointment be, where the very Heart and Soul was Bail for the happy Issue of the Event? And how destructive to the Tranquillity of Life, thus to be always rob'd of present Contentment, by these thieving Highway-Hopes of the World, which carry off our Thoughts and Liking to Futurities, that are least of all in our Power.

A length after all this Bustle and Competition, supplanting, &c. &c. the Event declares itself. Is it, is it to those of most Merit *always*? Who will venture to say so untrue a Thing? He knows nothing, who knows not frequent Instances to the contrary, that private Reasons, and particular Humours, or Interests deflecting from the more honest Spirit, and honourable Thoughts of Public Good, decide, and for the most Part dispose of those Favours.

WANTETH there any Instances of defeated Hopes in the most pursued Concerns, either in the lower, middle, or higher Conditions of Society? If they would all be willing, they cou'd all and every sincerely testify, and lament for more than any one ever yet desir'd to have experienc'd, or run the Risk of. For to be exempted from all Failure that way (I speak not yet of Losses,) is more than the Lot of precarious dependent Mortals. It is rather notorious how one Disappointment marries to another Disappointment, and they bring forth Children to the same Fortune, almost as sure as they are born. Every changing Moon can witness Vicissitudes and Vexations innumerable, arising from unforeseen, and sometimes dismal Frustrations: And the unchanging Fulness of Disquietude has driven some to Lunacy; others to the most disorderly and unruly Passions.

Is Riches, for Instance, the darling Scheme of all? As the Tantalum, the Power above all Powers of Things here below; at least the Luxuries, and sensual Delectables of this World. How prodigious has been the

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the Vicissitude? The Infatuation? How mournful the
 baffled Fortunes? How incomputable the Misfortunes,
 this Way, in this, and not only this, but other Realms,
 is never, can never be forgot; nor can it soon be re-
 dress'd. 'Tis too true, this Nation, once a wise and
 understanding People, ran precipitantly into a general
 Game, in this Pursuit. And how much the *whole*
Nation has lost by it, the whole Nation speaks for, and
 is in Council assembled to extricate itself from the
 unprecedented Disaster. As to the generality of Ad-
 venturers, I appeal to their own Bosoms, and with a
 most benevolent Intent, Whether that Readiness to im-
 pose upon themselves, by crediting their own Wishes,
 especially in the golden Dreams of Wealth; whether
 that prevailing proneness of making *haste to be rich*,
 together with Envy at others Acquisition of imaginary
 Oceans of Wealth, and Self-Vexation at their own
 Dulness for venturing no sooner; did not all concur
 to hasten the Crowders in, to retrieve that Mistake,
 by running as fast as they could into one? cheerfully
 parting with Certainty for Uncertainty, caring not how
 dear they bought their Hopes; because it was for the
 Sake of so much increasing, what is so commenda-
 ble in general, and so near at Heart in particular.
 Honest industrious Trade was a Spectator, some time;
 but finding nothing to do, after all Commerce with its
 necessary Support was launch'd in that Channel, and
 embark'd for another Sort of Return, prefer'd to be
 doing, rather than do nothing. What tho' it might or
 rather must, end in the Loss of some wrack'd and ruin'd,
 and that was to be the only great Gains of any? Yet
 all, to a Man, were too prudent to be *last*, and that
 they thought was as good as being first; so great, so
 grievous is the Deceitfulness of the Heart of the
 worldly Wife!

BUT could THEY have been hearken'd to, who always
 foresaw, and from the Beginning with Honour oppos'd
 this mighty Mischief, all Persons, and Things might
 have continued in that happy State they were in; and
 none wou'd have heard of the raging Exclamations of so
 many Losers, of what they count as dear to them as their
 Blood. Who, that before had no Concern, can now
 refrain it for so many sorrowing People? Or help be-
 ing incens'd at the undoubted Authors; *which* promp-
 ted,

ted, and had the Power to prevail with themso to lend their own Hand to bring upon themselves the Calamities they complain of. Are there any Authors of these Calamities within your *own* Jurisdiction, will you suffer one of them to live? Not seek them out where ever they abscond, and bring them to a *fair* Tryal? I beseech you, hear me patiently, who have some Authority for a *Religious* Enquiry into these Evils. Is it not seriously true? And is it not now the Time to be spoken, to be *petition'd* with all Submission? Seeing the first Perturbations of Resentment are a little over; and in some measure pacified with the condign Punishment of the *Directors*, and yet *apparent* Authors; that if you *certainly* know of any other *Aiders*, &c. let them likewise, in their Turn, be brought to Light, let them be arraign'd forthwith in God's Name (God, let me assure you, tho' he forbids Revenge to Private Persons in other Cases, allows it here to the full) that such Offenders be corrected also with proper Chastisement, is a good and *godly* Vengeance; for the Punishment is Salutory, and will prevent the like Mischief for ever after.

BUT first let them be witness'd against by God, and Man's Sufficiency of Evidence; which is *Two*, or *Three*, fully and directly proving this Accusation of being *Accessory*. For the *Love of the Father* let the Truth be confess'd. As St. *John* says in another Case, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself*: So if every immediate Sufferer in the present Case, wou'd lay his Hand on his Breast, 'tis more than probable (as for me, God forbid, that I shou'd accuse, or condemn any Man) that they may find the Witness in *Themselves*, *Two* at the least: 1. *Avaricious* Love of this World. 2. *Credulity* to every plausible Thing which offers to feed that Passion, if it does but *appear*, tho' a Vapour; tho' kindled by the Breath of the People, to the dazzling and amazing those that kindled it, we have lived to see the Days, how much these *light* Things have been credited by many altogether solid, if their Motives had been equally so: all ran in to warm themselves; few or none fear'd enough for themselves, whilst every one was sensible *somebody* must be burnt with the *Fall* thereof. It is certainly one of the greatest *Phenomena's* in the *Chronicle of Riches*! And, will be

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be remembred as an *Æra* of the strangest, of the suddenest Changes: and recorded too in the same Month, when the great *Combustion* besel the *Great City*: But with a Judgment so much worse, as it is worse to fall into the Hands of Man, than *GOD*. The loss of House or Goods is but a small Thing in Comparison of the Groans from the Irreparableness of private broken Credit, which Multitudes had to Trade with, and live well upon. When the Scheme came first out of the Hands of the *Legislature*, it set out full of solid Expedients for Public Advantages; and had continued so till the brooding Appetite for exorbitant Wealth (against all the illaudable and perpetually unlawful Ways of which nothing but the Law of *GOD* can prescribe) had not hatcht an infamous Abuse, and turn'd the Good into a general Evil. But to return to the *Witnesses*, pardon me, if I speak after them for your true good: If they depose against any, That their unfortunate inordinate Love of the World *directly* conspired with the *D-r--t--rs* (odious Names!) to bring on this sore Evil. Whatever is said of *others* what shou'd we not think, when ye think rightly, of yourselves? Are they all over guilty? And can *you* be all over innocent? At a religious Conference you must grant; in your Chamber, when still, you cannot deny; but those of your own Household, under your own Command, have abetted the Folly, and contributed *their* Share in helping the Losers to their Loss; and those to their Ruin, who are ruin'd thereby.

'Tis plainly so. How else cou'd any *Sett* of Men have had any Power or Opportunity to have affected you and the Public, as they have done, if they had not at first met with, what I before mention'd to work upon; if they had not been actually assisted, courted, and importun'd, by so many to take them into a Share of the profitable Game: which they knew must inevitably end, at length, in the Ruin of many; and without Exception to themselves, if they happen'd to be last; yet so eager to be richer and Greater, even at *those Hazards*; that they were undone! as they thought, if they could not get in; and now they find themselves, too many of them, in that Condition; by having their Desire of being in, answer'd.—Answer'd, as they believ'd beforehand, it must fall out in such a Case, that there must be Abundance of Losers to make any considerable Gainers. How wicked therefore, and deceitful

soever other concurrent Authors were, 'tis plain to Heaven and to all *dispassionate* Considerers of these Matters, that the Adventurers hasty Zeal, and over Fondness for the Things that are seen, even when they did not see them ought in Justice to bear one Moeity of the Blame. It may be, near one half were brought in, not so much by their wretched Acquaintance with and Courtship of the Conducters, as by their own more unhappy *Disposition* to imbibe the Infection of *Ally-Lucre*; and be drawn into the inglorious Market, where the Shadow of perishing Substance is bought, and sold; and just Dealing is the scarcest Commodity.

I contend with you, that no Body ought to plead a Word for Men, who will be always perhaps with, to be sure without Repentance, infamous in their Generation. Yet I would to God that all concern'd, would also learn not to overlook all Fault at Home; but implead themselves before Him, and their own *Reflection*, for those *worldly Motives* they acted upon; which had a better Face in the Law of the Land, than in the *Gospel* of CHRIST. Are they Gainers? Let them consider and take Advice, whether there ought to be much, or any Joy at that, which proves such a Misfortune to the Public.—Are they Losers? I am sure, they'll credit themselves as readily, that it was all for the *Gains* of this World; as they ought now to believe God ready to receive and comfort them with *better* Things, as soon as they do their Duty in taking that Occasion to turn, more from the World, unto Him.

[I]t is true, the Glory of all Islands is brought to present Dejection and Complaints. But tho' the *Heart-Achs* for these Miseries have been infinite; have not the Losers, however, the Satisfaction to behold the *LEGISLATURE* espouse their Case with all their Hearts, and with all their Wisdom; redressing, and doing all that can be done for *Them*, and for the good of the Whole, in *Justice* and *Compassion* to their Circumstances? Ought any thing to content them more, than to see themselves, *Representatively* sit in Judgment upon the *Authors* of their Disasters? And so stigmatize and punish (Ay, there's the Pleasure!) that insatiable, rapacious Avarice, which prompted Those to allure the Consent of These, to venture to lose so much by them, with a *Confiscation* of their Effects, and a *Disgorge* of their guilty Gains.

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Is it not therefore great *Heart-ease* to all, to behold them legally dispossest'd of, what they so scandalously by a Robbery within Law, but not without the Reach of the Law-makers, dispoil'd others of? Tho' those others are not, cannot all be restor'd to their *entire* own again, they have the Compensation to observe, the detected Spoilers cannot keep it; and the Cry of Justice, *Refund, Refund*, so comply'd with. Nothing certainly could be more just, than to go to the *Root of all the Evil*, and punish the exorbitant *Love of Money*, with the *Loss* of it. It was *Avarice* in so many Shapes, that did all the Mischief. To seize their *Wealth* therefore, and execute their *Estates*, is *Measure for Measure*; [the famous Justice of *Lex Talionis*]. It is just towards GOD, as well as the Christian World, that all the late Worshipers of the late *Deities*, (almost Nationally ador'd thro' a Covetousness guilty of Idolatry) have now scarce any Piry left for the false Objects. If the LORD GOD, was *jealous of his Honour*, no Wonder they are become a publick Odium, Friendless, Abandon'd, Castaways: That He might do us the more Good, by more strongly convincing us all of the Good of forsaking the undue Love of his Rivals, this World; and advance, befriend, and reward all those who will be convinc'd and converted unto Himself more and more, from that Day forward.

HOW much better Employment is this for our Thoughts? than to listen to the Artifices of *those*, who unworthily take Advantage of the present Passions only to inflame them the more into unruly Ferment; who use elaborate Pains to misrepresent Matters ten times worse, than (GOD be prais'd!) they really are; and therefore complain, or rather declaim in such popular Airs, and tragical Fictions, as can serve to nothing but to make Things worse: By turning Anger into Fury, Discontents into general Despair, and the best Friends (if possible) into the worst Enemies to the longer Injoyment of the present *Protestant* Settlement and Succession: As if it were desirable that the Enemies by *Principle* should increase and take Courage, and the Embers under the Ashes (which would have gone out by degrees) be blown into a Flame, to destroy the whole Fabric, and all the Incendiaries with it: who go out of their Way to heap up false Accusations, foreign to every Purpose, but that Wisdom from *benath*, which plays the Devil at black-

ening and accusing ; in order to deprive every Body of a good Opinion of every Thing, and Person ; even denying a Right to Patience, or almost any longer Submission to *Governours*. But after all the Losses it wou'd be most deplorable, to see People so lost to all Consideration, as to think the Parliament of *Great Britain*, is not the best Judge of the Public Good, and of every the most effectual Methods for securing and retrieving it, in the present Difficulties ; so lost to all Reason as to imagine, it can have any shew of Probability, that the *Piloting* thro' them can ever be committed to *better Hands*, or *abler Heads* : So lost to all Reason as not to believe, That we should be in utmost Danger of *running a Ground* and *splitting to Pieces*, if it was taken out of *Their* Care and Conduct, and committed to those violent *Self-recommending*, wrong-exaggerating Complainers. *Losers have leave*, as they say, *to speak*. But how much better is it for them to speak, and you to hear certain, than *uncertain* Things ? What makes for *peaceable* Justice, than what tends to throw all into Tumult ? The railing against *Superiors*, not only *Now*, but at any Time, is the easiest Topic in the World to ill-minded Persons. But the Consequence of giving Ear to those Mens Appeals, against what lies before the Wisdom of *Parliament* is to become a *Chaos*, and be no longer that Society we are *constituted* : it is to forget Your *Country* and your *Christianity* ; which, whilst they jointly command all *legal* Obedience to those in Authority over us, must be understood to forbid all *disaffected* and *unruly* Clamours against Them. Be exhorted therefore, my beloved Brethren, by *us* the Public Preachers and Remembrancers of those Duties, to be aware of the Fallacies and Devices of all open, and secret Underminers of our present Happiness : Defeat their Hopes, disdain their Aims ; by preserving, like dutiful Christians and Subjects, all necessary good Opinion of Your present *Governors*. Under whom, humanly speaking, we have the best, nay the *only*, Prospect of wise Conduct, present Safety, and future Prosperity.]

BUT I return to my Business of transferring the Considerations of the *present* State of our Temporals, to the *Things above*. I pretend not to impeach, or discriminate any persons bad Morives, from their good Ones, in putting their Effects and their Hearts into this ever memorable Pursuit : They are open and known to the Judge of all

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Hearts. GOD he only knoweth, tho' some have taken effect, how many Greatnesses and Ambitions for this World have thus prov'd Abortive, almost within Sight of Execution. He only can count the Changes to more exalted State of Life that have been meditated and thus miscarried, leaving the anticipating Imagination miserably disappointed. Nor how many fine Edifices with their Appurtenances; nor what shining Equipages; New Titles of Honour; nor how much faring sumptuously every Day, together with some few *Speculative* Charities have been laid aside, and despair'd of with the utmost Regret. Had this Kingdom at any Time, much less in so short a Time, ever before a Reason like the present? No; it never had to take up the serious Reflection in the Book of *Wisdom*, *What good hath our Riches with our Vaunting brought us*. O grievous Impoverishment! That hast been able by thy Sorrow to make the Young look Old, and by casting back, to bring the Old to begin the World again.

"O GOD wonderful in thy Disposals! Thou laughest at the vain Aspirings of Men after this World, and they come to naught; Thou wouldest have nothing thought greater lasting but Thyself. Thou hast laid before thy Worshipers in these Realms, a general conscious Representation, how false and fickle this World is to its overfond Votaries; and how absolutely unworthy to be any more thy Rival; as well as how frequent it is, for the short-sighted Policies of Men to be caught in the same Snare they laid privily for others. To how many hast Thou given Cause to blush and be confounded, for the Folly of courting so much the momentary Favour of a few *Directing*, only *self-designing* Morals; and not more securing the Favour of Thee, the surely enriching Power, the only never changing GOD? Or hast Thou mortified our Hearts with Tribulation and Anxiety concerning less valuable Properties, *preparatively* to the more tremendous Designs Thou LORD in Thy just judgments mayst have upon our *Lives*, yet to follow by *Infection* from the *same* Country, horridest to think on of all that is Sublunary! That the Covetous may see their own Leprosy of *Covetousness*, that Plague of Righteousness, chastis'd with the Plague of Pestilence, vengeful Destruction taking account of the other. The dire Scene is only chang'd from one City to another; actually renewing its Threats against us; raging with greater Fury than last Year; treading under Foot, all the Human Prudence, Precautions and Assistances of
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those Parts; the Care of the *Magistrate*, the Prayers of the *Minister*, and the Cure of the *Doctor*, for hindring its spreading, or saving those that are smitten. We indeed ought to fear, how very likely it is to arrive in this Kingdom, which is such a Lover of useful Opulency, even by the very Means of increasing our Riches, Navigation: And who can tell the Mind of Providence, how soon? — But whatever is the Order, or Season of thy Judgments, we thank Thee, LORD GOD Almighty, we know the End of them, *viz. That the Inhabitants of the Earth may learn Righteousness.* That thou mayst refrain us, and reform us from the Corruption that is in the World, thro' inordinate Lusts after it. Thou hast kindly mix'd Illusion, and bitter Fears in all the Sweets, in all the Projects thereof, that the very *Vexation* at the same, might help to stop our Extravagancies, and dispose us to to return to our long-expecting Father, and so recover ourselves seasonably, and once for all, to our true Happiness. *Thy Will be done.* We will bosom up thy Warnings, in grateful Sense, for first making others to us, and not us (as we deserv'd) to others, the Tragical Alarm of thy incens'd Wrath. We believe the *rod of God* of the *Pestilence*, that GOD, his Anger, and his *irresistable* Ways are in it of a Truth. That no Age, nor Sex are Proof against it, as it walketh in Darkness, and gives the fatal Visit unseen, nor is it well known when, or where; but this is known, that when the Poison of Life is diffus'd thro' the Common Air the Good must fall as well as the Bad; it is alas true, *that vain is the help of Man!* Since Thou art then the only Physician, we will think of thy Antidotes, and labour by Love, and Good-Works to engage thy Favour, O Thou Preserver of Men; with *thy Favour* will we chiefly care to store ourselves, which is *better than Life itself*, by keeping a Conscience void of Offence towards Thee, and towards Men. Thy Word is healing, and is the best Prevention: And is *the Sting of Death Sin?* And is it in our Power to provide against that *Venom?* We will repent of every Sin, and shall we be less afraid to drop the next, when *Thousands fall beside us, and Ten Thousands at our Right-Hand.* In the Eternal Things of our Religion we ought to repose, and forecast a Refuge after this so very uncertain Life; in the Fear of Thy Name we can trust, can recal the noble Works that Thou hast done in old Time before us; in Thee we will comfort ourselves, in Thee *only* can we take lust

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Courage, and so under thy Wings stave off those *Panic* Fears and Faintings of Apprehension, which leaves that great Mortality but half its work to cast down, and turn all that is visible of us into Corruption. — Thou hadst told us, but we minded it not, until now ; we verily in earnest believe our own Experience ; and our Apprehensions of yet worse to come, *That the Things which are seen are Temporal*, and extremely transient. And what have we now left for our Stay and Hold in this fluctuating, threatening Scene of Things, but our Eternal Settlement GOD and RELIGION and the Fruition of that HEAVEN he fram'd us for ? ”

WAS it possible for our Pursuits of Heaven thus egregiously to miscarry, and be so deplorable also, GOD Himself would justly be voted no longer a Director there ; and Heaven itself shou'd be preach'd as great a Bubble, as much a Vanity, as this World. But, GOD be thank'd, those Things have happen'd unto us for an *universal* Reflection and Confession, That what we most seek after, has most Frustration and Anger in it ; and what we least pursue is all Certainty, Joy, and Attainment ; that we may be comforted to the Pursuit of it more and more. To that shou'd we look up with awaken'd Eyes of Faith ; and now our Eyes are open, with these Comforts let us wipe away all Tears. For what we seek of that we find, and what we find we infallibly keep for ever. But as to the fable vanishing Things of this Earth they lurch and disappoint all Mankind. One half who seek them in vain, that is prov'd already : And the other half.



I I.



WH^O possess them with as vain Hope of meeting with their Happiness in them, which is the *Second* Thing now in order to be made good.

NEED I say, Possession is the propounded Centre of all Pursuits? It is so much, that none talk of entituling themselves effectually to any Thing without it. What other is the Persuasion of any of us with relation to this World, but that if we were once in Possession of our Wishes, how happy, happy shou'd we be? Now as soon as it can be suppos'd that God has granted, and you are enter'd upon all the Success you can enlarge your Heart unto in its Researches in the Things that are seen; it will still appear, that you miss your Happiness, even when you have attained your Ends, and are still to seek, and are little the better notwithstanding *Possession*.

OF this be your own Experience also the Judge, in the last resort; only let the Affluence and the Experience *Royal* of *Solomon* be first consulted and advis'd with. Forasmuch as the Wisdom from Above, whence we profess to learn Truth, has purposely recorded and reported it of the Case under Consideration; and for very satisfying and most improving Reasons. 1. That in one Sermon (the admirable one of *Ecclesiastes* the Preacher) might be given the very best State of the Case the Thing is capable of. 2. That all Exception possible to be thought of by the Sons of Men in after-Days, might be the more famously obviated and effectually silenc'd, seeing all things under the Sun were actually tried and exquisitely examin'd by one of the most penetrating, and most improving Observation, indeed the greatest *Genius* in the World; having largeness of Heart even as the Sand of the Sea. Who therefore amass all Things, that as united Sands bring weight with them, so what in its own Nature could not, might at least by variety and superabundance bring in at last the answer of Contentment; by one, who not only had all the power of means and nothing wanting in this World, to make the Experiment to the utmost perfection, but *set his Heart* moreover to make it, and to find out the Matter. And

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(4) Eccl. ii.
2 & vii. 4.

that can the Man do more that comes after such a King? even that which hath been already (a). Will he pretend, or can he retire to exceed him? It is enough that he assume his Share, and try the Matter over again with him; and when he is content with that, let him consider the Particulars.

THAT Solomon had all Variety of Garden and of all Plantation, from the little Hyssop that cleaveth to the Wall to the tall wide-spreading Cedar: Some part err'd (suppose) into elegant Figures, and embroider'd Borders; some rang'd in their Lines, or polish'd in their Orders with the others into the best Views: Here grew for the Pleasure of the Eye, there for the Smell; others for the Pallate to be serv'd with, the first Course, or to conclude the Feast: In short, whatever Nature could produce in conjunction with the best Art for its Husband. Yet the *Fruit of Contentment* grew not there. — His Historian (b) says, He understood the Nature and Uses of Fishes, Fowls, Beasts and Creeping Things: And he (c) himself acquaints us of his Pools of Water; which being diversify'd into Projects, and mov'd with the living Action of Fountains, compleats the Delights of Garden. Doubtless the Element of Water likewise exonerated all its best Fruits, and Uses to his Pleasures.

As to the Majesty and elegance of his *Buildings*, either for Dwelling, for Justice, for the Pleasure of himself or Pharaoh's Daughter, there can be no Question: Because he was the first Architect who built a *House for God* (d). For this his Workmen were inspir'd; for the other (e) therefore they could want no Skill to compose whatever was beautifully best in Foundation, or Coping, Doors, or Windows, in stately Pillars with their Bases and Chapiters, ornamented with Wreaths of Network or Chain-work, with the Foliage of Pomegranate and Lilly-work; with all the Cunning that could be shew'd in the casting of Brasses, with all the Lustre that could be seen in the Polish of that, or of various costly Stone, and with all the Fragrancy that could be enjoy'd from the sweet-smelling, long-lasting Cedar. Moderns may boast; but it is mighty probable Moderns can never exceed; if equal, with their Skill. — However, He, nor they, ever was, or will be

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(a) Eccl. ii. 12.

(b) 1 Kings iv. 33.

(c) Eccl. ii. 6.

(d) 1 Kings vii. 47.

(e) 1 Kings vii.

able to erect the Dwelling-place of full Rest and Settlement, short of that *Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens* (a).

As to the Pleasures of the Ear, he had (b) gotten him Men-Singers and Women-Singers, and Instruments, and that of all Sorts: All the melodious Sounds that Vocal or Instrumental Music, Single, or in Consort; whatever the *Purcells* of those Days cou'd invent, for elevating his Mind at Chapel, exhilarating at Feast, or unbending it from Business, he imbib'd the Delights, and dwell upon the Recitatives with Rapture.

AND if his Eyes were agreeably delighted with Beauty, we may largely reckon, they wanted nothing of those Charms; according to his own Words, *Whatever mine Eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not mine Heart from any Joy* (c). Yet what was all that Conversation but Blank and Balk to that *Part of Man*, which can take up the Hopes of its Rest in nothing on this Side of, *When neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive!*

THIS King also had his *Exchequer* full of Treasure, and beside that, and not in that, was possess'd of the Hearts of his People; to whom Silver was as plentiful as the Stones in the Street. He tells us, *He had gathered the peculiar Treasure of Kings and of Provinces* (d). The Revenue of his Household was more like a Nation, than a Family: So numerous, yet every Thing in such glorious Order, that the Queen of the South was ravish'd with Admiration. And if Crown'd Heads cou'd be captivated with the Wonder, well might the rest of the World.

BUT the Wonder of all was his *Wisdom*. For it was (e) exceeding much beyond all Men, excelled the Wisdom of all the Children of the East-Country, and all the Wisdom of Egypt; the most renown'd for all Science. So well vers'd in Antiquity, that his Comment upon it, is, *The Thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new Thing under the Sun* (f). That is, in the Sense which he always carries with him thro'out that *Book*, the former Days before him were neither better nor worse, than his own; nor his,

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(a) 2 Cor. v. 1. (b) Eccl. ii. 8. (c) Ibid. v. 10. (d) Ver. 2.
(e) 1 Kings iv. 29, &c. (f) Eccl. i. 2.

(a) Eccl. x
17, 18, 11.

than ours 2700 Years after, in respect of finding the so much sought for *sufficit* of Happiness in the Things of this World. There is something farther, and so much better for the Soul's Rest and Comfort, that she does well to be angry at the Illusion of Things below. What variety of MSS. Natural History, and Cabinet Curiosities he might have, is only supposable from what he seems to say of his Library being very voluminous, where he says, *That of making many Books there is no End* (d). And tho' in Honour he preferreth Wisdom before all earthly Things, as likeliest to give the best Notion of their Vanity, that one best and true Judgment of the Matter; yet esteemeeth he of that also in several Accents of Discontent. Inasmuch as, 1. to acquire it is *great Weariness to the Flesh* (b); and with the increase of Knowledge, Sorrow increaseth (c). 2. So little is our Knowledge at the most, that *tho' a wise Man thinks to know all Things under the Sun, yet shall he not be able to find it* (d). 3. Because the *Heirs* of the *Wise* may prove *Fools*, or next unto it; yet are they to have *Rule* over all his Labour wherein he hath shewed himself wise under the Sun (e). 4. Because the *Wise*st are not most prefer'd; neither is a Man's Wisdom, tho' ne'er so great, or so saving of others, in any suitable degree respected, unless he's also in topping Circumstances (f). 5. By reason the *Wise* Man and the *Fool* are *equally* liable to Death, which comes in any Shape, with as little Respect to one, as the other; and after a sufficient Course of Years, as little Remembrance of one as t'other (g). But one Generation passeth away, and another cometh; cometh, as the Water closeth after the transmitted Ship, so vanisheth the Place of those who pass over this River of Time to the Shores of Eternity. We have not, perhaps, more than half the Monuments of the Deaths of *Emperors*, it may be not of the *Empires themselves*, in the Vicissitudes that have happen'd on this Globe; what infinite Multitudes therefore of private Persons must be content to go off the Stage in Oblivion?

BUT now the Wisdom of the wisest begins to collect its Strength, and shew itself to Admiration in summing up from a Review of the Whole, That the good of Know-

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(a) Eccl. xii. 12.

(b) Ibid.

(c) Chap. i. 18.

(d) Chap. viii.

17. iii. 11.

(e) ii. 18. &c.

(f) x. 6. ix. 16.

(g) ii. 15.

ledge and the whole Value of *Understanding* consists in converting its Store of Observations, as much as can be, to *Practise*: Taking down Minutes from the visible, in reference to the Things that are invisible; with an Aspect always to the GREAT CONCLUSION, the one only solid in the whole Matter, the whole Contents of this Orb, which is *Fearing God, and keeping his Commandments*. For void of that good Respect and happy Prospect, it is no better than meer Amusement, and very often, as Experience evidences, Vexation to a Man's self, and others; it is everlasting Dispute and Jangle; puzzling, instead of explaining, that good Text of the Law of God, which is certainly a Rule of *Living*, and not of endless quarrelling: It is any Thing — what you please, rather than true Wisdom. And as to every earthly Thing besides, not sought nor enjoy'd in the Coherent Hope of better Things to come; but delighted in absolutely for their own Temporary Sake, for that little lasting, less suitable, and most insincere Enjoyment derivable from them, tho' a Man live a *Thousand Years twice told, yet hath he seen no good* (a); *The Eye being neither satisfied with seeing*, nor the *Ear with hearing*; nor any of the Appetites with any of their Objects (b); they are in the most vehement Letter of Words, and Expression of Mind *Vanity of Vanities*; Frustration itself: And both the Prologue, and the Epilogue of this Play of Life, nothing but *Vexation* added to it.

SEEING then the wisest of Kings has shewn his Wisdom in setting forth the *Vanity* i. e. the true worth of sub-lunary Things which he enjoy'd as a King; since He has given us his Royal Word and Assurance from his own intimate Acquaintance; especially since God, who knows all Things best, has ascertain'd us of it by his most authentic and infallible Word, have we not all the Reason in the World? Supposing *these* his Experiences to be *those* Elegancies and Delectables of Living, which actually attract, and give such a Thirst to our Wishes for them; I say none other Things than what you yourselves must confess, That we have all imaginable Grounds to believe, and receive the *convictive* Impression; in order to lessen our Fondness, and shorten our long long Cares, in just Proportion to the well-prov'd Character of their Littleness, their Emptiness, and their either

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(a) Eccl. vi. 6.

(b) Eccl. i. 8. v. 10. vi. 7.

(c) Ps.

short Abode with us, or we with them. That we may hence-
 forth play the Men in giving our Cares and Affections more
 length, and Reach, and Leisure, and Pleasure for the glo-
 rious Things, that are more than Temporal and better
 than Earthly; so much better for, and similar to our in-
 visible half, in that they *are not seen*. Did none but hungry
 Philosophers or Religionists ever speak their Sense or utter
 Remarks upon the Emptiness and Unsatisfactoriness of
 worldly Possessions, I grant, it might well be suspected to
 proceed from a Spirit of Envy, or finding fault with what
 they cannot attain, or a Design to make others sick of what
 they wou'd fain be at. But when even *Kings* themselves
 (such was *DAVID* and *SOLOMON*, and after him *M.*
Antoninus Emperor of *Rome* (a), and none of them *Priest-*
hidden) when They condescend also to dispense out their
 great Feeling and Experience, *That it is so indeed*, who of us
 that are so much less, will pretend to evade the Power of
 the Argument, or refuse its Conviction? If still resolv'd to
 believe none but your-Self, *i. e.* one wiser than *Solomon*, in
 your own Account; Ye shall try as oft as it seemeth meet,
 Ye shall find nothing new under the Sun, but a new Vani-
 ty, with regard to some unexperienc'd with it; and at the
 Foot of the Account it shall, it will, it ever must be the
 same Confession over again, *That which is wanting cannot be*
number'd: and seeing there are many Things which encrease
Vanity, what is Man the better (b)? If impatient after
 all this, to go thro' the whole Process of the Experiment your-
 selves, you are as certain as you live, of losing your labour,
 and in a dreadful Probability of losing yourselves likewise.
 Is it Credulity to hearken to the Experience of all who have
 ever made the Essay? Or is it not ridiculously more so to
 believe in brittle Blessings, which never yet fail'd to elude
 Contentment, and leave a Sting behind in the Trust of those
 simple Ones, who lov'd the Simplicity of relying on them?
Bought Wit for all Things under the Sun is not only too dear,
 but impossible to be come at by *all* or almost any of the
Subjects, in this World; therefore less must serve the Turn.
 Nevertheless, I deny you nothing, I am only entreating you
 by all Means to judge of the whole by that *Sample* of the
 very same, you have already in Hand.

THEY who reckon their Share of this World by high
 sounding Titles, and many Manors; or the stipend of their
 Faculty;

(a) *De Rebus suis*. L. viii. N. 1. & alib.

(b) *Eccles. i. 15. vi. 11.*

Faculty; or Returns in Traffic; or the Earnings of Art Manual, or Labour Servile, may be all ask'd; nay, the common Sentiment of Mankind can successfully be appeal'd to for a concurrent Verdict: Whether they place, and adore, the *Favourite* good of Life in Court-Favour; or in heaping up Riches niggardly; or spending them extravagantly; in the Toils and honourable Dangers of the Camp; or the rural Sports of the wholesome Field; in the Pleasures of the Belly, Good-Fellowship, &c. in Popularity and Fame; in Ostentations of Dress and Appearance: Whether placed in the Pre-eminence of Wit, and Satyr; in the Blood of Family and Heraldry; in foreign Travel; or in fine Houses, Gardens, Paintings, Curiosities at Home; in *Virtuoso* and *Antique* Learning, or whatever Qualification is fashionable. All these and every one else you can ask, will be ready to depose the same Thing. Tho' in nothing else, they are all agreed in giving in Dissatisfaction and Disappointment, provided they have been any while possess'd of them. Or, if you would rather give Ear to *dying* Persons, as more sincere and serious, in their Opinion of the Case; What did your Father or Mother, or the dearest Friend you ever lost, say at their *Death-bed*? You never, it may be, heard of any departing hence, who would chuse, had they their Choice, to lead their *wonted* Life over again; so very little will it bear re-injoying, whether it be good, or bad. And you yourselves, finally, will do Justice to the same Truth, and subscribe with them all, even those of you who possess your present Lot of Life with all the Powers of Enjoyment, *viz.* "That in all your Seekings you ever conceited more Happiness, than you receiv'd from *Possession*: And that better than what you have already is still in something not yet arriv'd to Possession."

FOR *that* your Happiness still lingers, and still must fall short of its full Complement, as long as it is true, and the Thing certain, that nothing on this side the Things eternal can ever give a Receipt in full to it. In hopes to fare better have you not however varied the Effort, and busied all the Nerves of Pursuit to attain the End? You have attain'd: and how quickly all as one, and all defective? After disappointments many, you set out again with ardent and unquenched Desire of the satiating Bliss; again willing to deceive yourselves even against your Experience; as if most of the Pleasure consisted in being cheated: Tired with the last, and if not by this Time, you soon will be tired with the new.

For

for upon every Possession incessantly there springs up new Desires, new Passions, and Opinions unknown, unthought of by us before. Thus self-deceiving Man amuses himself to Old-age, and Death, in a vain Hunt and false Scent after shifting, variously fraudfull, certainly unrecompencing Things; *Spending his Money* (in the *Prophetic Complaint* (a), *for that which is not Bread, and his labour for that which profiteth not; wearing himself for very Vanity.*

I T is granted, that the Faculty of Search with its Offspring Inclinations to *Novelty*, was given us to find out, by inquiry, our suitable Good, and real Felicity. But after you have fruitlessly and so often examin'd these Temporals, what News, what Test they can bring you concerning it; in that daily Circumstance, what is Reason given for? But to interpose, by distinguishing wherein it *cannot*, and by apprizing wherein it *must* exist, if it ever exists at all; that is, in Things of another, and higher Nature. And thus having the Taste and the true Attachment of them in our Hopes, reflect daily that we breath chiefly for them; and are to use this World, be it less, or more, not as our Settlement, but our Accommodations in Trust, for Trial of Faith and Virtue, in a transient Passage to *our* better Things.

T O say nothing of the adventitious Troubles, and Levities of Life; *ill-gotten Wealth*, false Fears of Superstition; nor of Ambition, of envying and being envied; nor of those Misconducts and Mismanagments, of some, which help to increase the Vanity of this temporal Life. Nor how much one Man's Opinion about the Supreme Good in these Things is at Variance with his Fellow of as good Judgment, and what clashing and mutual Condemnation ensues. Neither will I debate how much we ourselves dispraise, and actually disvalue our own eager Pursuits and fatiguing Purposes, by honouring *them* as happiest, who have no Care after more Possessions; or, so little and good Measure of it, as troubles them not, interrupts no better Duty; which is, as it should be, as *if they cared for them not*: not for their own Sakes and Selves, but to relieve and do good; and so greaten *the Foundation* they are wisely *laying up for the Time to come*. To say nothing how much Variety is sought after to support the Gust of sensual Delights; tho' that is an ample Confession of their
several

(a) *Isai. lv. 2. Hab. ii. 13.*

several Vanities, and of the languishing State of all, of one: A loathing and injoying the same, Things Turn; Health itself in default of a real Distemper, not seldom turning into V--p--rs, the Ape of all Disease, which makes dismal Answers to, *How do you do?*—omit all these; such are the native Changes and Ficklenesses, Pains and Sicknes incident to human Things; together with Losses and Damages inflictible on our Name, Fortune, Person, and upon all that bear Relation to our Evils sufficient to our Day of Life! That there never was a truer Saying, than that of the *Psalm: Verily, every Man in his BEST ESTATE is altogether Vanity* *. We then; if it is a reasonable Supposition, That the Lower aspire no higher, than to the *best Estate* of the Things that are seen; I beg the Matter may be fairly argued with respect to that State.

It is not begging the Question. No: depend upon it, in great Greatness there is, at many particular Junctures much Poverty of Contentment. That lamentable In-Exemption from the common Sorrows, Perils, and Fatigue of all Men, always lives with them, and will be their *Vulgar Companion*, whether they will, or not. The *Scepter*, nor *White-Staff*, nor *Sword*, nor *Mace*, nor *Scarlet Robe* have any distancing awe over approaching Diseases, or Death; any more than they, whose Backs are warm with a botch'd Garment, and their Bellies fed with the cheapest Wholsoms; any more than those Footstool of the People, "*Clean your Shoes your Honour*." Precedence of Place has got no Vitals, or Stomach-Privilege to stew for digesting better, or looking healthier, or living longer. The Supreme Sauce of Hunger, which the latter are honestly help'd to by the Trade of their Condition, much out-rids the best Inventions of the luxurious: Whose Digestion is so often nice, and sickly for want of the other, and which they undervalue merely because it is so cheap. The Rose smells, and the well-ripen'd common Cherry eats as delicately; the Sky, and Fields look with the same Colours; the Birds, the Music of Nature, sing their Melody without Respect of Persons; Winter, and Summer and good Weather come as regularly to one, as to other: And who sleeps soundest is as easy to guess, as who knows not that

* Psalm xxxix. 6.

* Eccl

that the Mind of great Circumstances is agitated with the most Perturbations, and their Bodies with the least Exercise? To cross whose imperious Humour, perhaps Whimfy (a Crime hardly to be forgiven) is as solid a Grief to the many, very many fantastically injur'd among them, as Oppression well can be to the Poor. And is not *that* as incident to one, as *this* is to the other? Tho' *on the side of the Oppressors there was Power, yet they had no Comforter* *. For in Reality so many inordinate, ungratifiable Passions as the high and mighty in Rule, and Revenue, submit themselves Vassals, so many *Lords* have they, for so long, over them: subjecting to great Inconveniences and Disorders, and imposing on them the dear Tribute of Peace within, and Peace with God.

IN short, all the Substantials of Man's Estate are promiscuous to the Vulgar and the Great: And they are both upon a Level in the several Decays, and Variations appertaining. The *indifferent* Things of Life, are indeed the Distinction, and sole Prerogative of the one, above the other. Such are the Shadow of fine Shews; the Ceremonies of Precedence, of Title, of some set Phrases, of the Manners of the Hat, of the Bow and Curtesy of the Body. Keeping to themselves (unreasonable Envy at it!) A pre-eminent Propriety in the *Eclat* and Din, and all the Tedioufness, and all the Resentment that can, and often does weigh heavy out of those *light* Things. For did not a revengeful Resentment against an *Inferior*, put such a Sting into the ample Fortune of *Haman*, Prime Minister of one of the greatest Monarchs, that *all those Things availed him nothing* †; for all he had so very much, he least of all Men enjoy'd himself, or the World. For him to see, and for others to see in him, the Man whom *Haman hated*, exalted to the Honour the other was troubled down from, is a tormenting Circumstance, as well as a mortifying Conviction of that divine, often experienced Maxim of the Wise King, *Favour is deceitful* ††.

THEY who imagine the best Thing of Life, is to be set off with a fine Figure and blazing Appearance; What do they but go about the Streets begging their Happiness from Door to Door of the Spectators.

E

FASHION;

* Eccl. iv. 1.

† Eccl. v. 13.

†† Prov. xxx 32.

FASHION, and Fame, and Popularity are they not vain, as oft as the desire of them disposeth to run in to every Folly that is in Vogue? Is it not a Vexation, when Calumny and Misrepresentation confidently reported, and generally spread, shall be able to give a Wound that no Vindication can totally recover? The Glory that cometh from the Populace being about as constant in regard to never-changing, as the diverse-blowing Wind, *What profit hath he who hath labour'd for the Wind?*

IS not Wit thro' its frequent Mis-rule and Satyr observ'd to lose more Friends than it ever made?

HOW fruitless is foreign Travel as oft as it leaves a Man only the greater Stranger to himself, by being full of *Abroad?*

HOW unedifying the Study of Nature, unless our little Knowledge, and the finding out our greater Ignorance scientifically leads our Understanding to the Adoration of God, Piety, and Humility?

AND where Blemishes, or Things of no use, become Business, and Beauties to the Antiquaries, I wish there be not some Vanity got among them?

AS to the Honours of Blood and Heraldry; if Virtues to our Country were, as it mostly is, the Original Founder, and should be the constant, as it is the only becoming, Supporter of their Arms; and if the cause is as good as the effect and virtually contains it, is it not, at least, as to the Qualifications, in every Body's Power to ennoble themselves? By exerting in their Sphere, that Public Spiritedness and Virtue; without which the other is a meer out-side Piece of State.

AND certainly the Belly-God which so many Worship, is as vain as any other Idol, considering how all unlawful Sacrifices are stolen from good Order; and that breaking of the Commandments breaks the very Intention of sound Pleasure. How feeble is that Fruition which decays by the Force of its own Repetition, or sickens by Surfeit? And how wrong are all the Riots and irregular Gratifications of Sense? When to govern half the Globe is not a Quarter so good, as to maintain a constant Victory over them. And behold a greater than *Alexander* is there, where-ever you see the Man without his Toil or Danger conquering the World, in the reasonable way.

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CON seen are ment dif any is so Gratificat in Eterna yet as f summon' their Po have fou tion of t needs en of Life, Wishes o they tried wherefor from as Seeing th both, viz better, a Parish R Service, ding is d ye never and so m DOU thing to ly plenteo

AS to Riches lastly, the great *Diana* of all, to how many Hurts and extraordinary Vainesses are they laid up, when laid up with a greedy Mind? Or to how many are they spent, when spent with a profuse one? In the first State, they fall short of their Use, and so Occasion pitiless Contumelies, and Follies incurable, as long as the Owners think fit to want even what they have; in the other, they overshoot their Use, and as vainly miss of their true Purpose: And both Ways are the Occasion and Means of very deplorable Evil. And is not this the general OEconomy of the World with relation to them? Is not this the common Fallacy of the Happiness that is thought to be in them? To say nothing of the infinite Anguish from their Losses, or the Cares to get, or the Cares to keep them; or the no uncommon want of Heirs; or the Plenty of Flatterers gathering about them.

CONSIDERING then; if the Things that are seen are both pursu'd and possess'd in vain, the Enjoyment disappoiting us as well as the Losses, whenever any is so wrong as to seek, or hope thence for the full Gratification of that part of his Nature which resides in Eternal Things, similar to itself, unseen like the Soul, yet as sure as that: if those in Highest Sphere have summon'd all Varieties in visible Nature, to give to their Possession the stable good of Man; and if They have found a *Deficiency* in all, and made their *Recantation* of the Vanity of *all*; for these good Reasons I must needs entreat, and prevail with You in the *lower* Sphere of Life, to be the more at ease as to Your Pursuits and Wishes of being what they were, or are, and trying what they tried. When THEY even they, were denied the Privilege, wherefore I beseech, shou'd you look for an Exemption from as much Deficiency, at least, in what you Possess? Seeing there is one and the same Reason in common to both, *viz.* Your seen Things are *Temporal*, and theirs no better, at the best. Your Neighbours are malicious; or Parish Rates run high; Your Trade, Your Crops, Your Service, Your Health are all precarious: Sometimes Trading is down, Provisions dear, and Work scarce. Have ye never seen, have ye never felt none of these Things, and so make a shift to rub thro' the World?

DOUBTLESS every Condition of Life has *something* to bear; and every one its own Burthen. So truly plenteous, humanly and divinely speaking, is this World

in Troubles, wearisom in Cares, false in its Promises and Comforts; sure enough in its Reproaches, its several kinds of Sickness, its several kinds of Death, to High, and Low, Rich and Poor alike. Having its Joys allay'd with Grief, sometimes upon the most jovial Days, Triumphs, Marriages, or Festivity; its hopes dash'd with Disappointment, not seldom on the Crisis of succeeding; its Tenures with Losses; and every Enjoyment with Unconstancy, and with very imperfect Satisfaction. That these Things are so; that they are the Native Growth of this World; and that they affect, and for the most Part inflict the Inhabiters thereof, is proclaim'd, as it were with a Trumpet every Where, and by every Thing. Our Faith, our Reason, the Experience of all before us ratified by that of ourselves, all teach us That, as at the longest they are but Short, so at the firmest they are but Fugitive.

INSOMUCH that without a Prospect into the better Things of Eternity, these Temporals wou'd not deserve the owning, nor all the World be worth our accepting upon Condition of being tied down to it for ever. *O quam vilis & contempta res est Homo, nisi supra Humana se exerit* (a)? Why, saith the Scripture (b)? *God was not ashamed to be called their God by the Patriarchs during the Days of their Pilgrimage? The Reason follows; For he had prepared for them a City.* As if he that made us might well be ashamed, if he had provided no better, nor more enduring Substance for us, than this World. To be sure, He design'd us all for certain Happiness; but how can Certainty be built upon Uncertain Things? Of which we have no Security; no, not for the Space of one revolving Moon. Who knows what a Day may bring forth? Who knows not that every Sublunary like the Moon in its full Glory is liable to an Eclipse? How soon may they, who think themselves at ease in Prosperity, and are ready to deride these sober Observations, feel the Truth of them? They who condemn such serious, seasonable Exercise of Mind, are they not more worthy to be condemn'd themselves? If the Royal Preachers Judgment of the Case may be taken, *The Heart of the Wise is*

(a) Seneca.

(b) Heb. xi, 16,

in the House of Mourning (a): And never more Occasion than now.

WHAT then? shall we call the Things we cannot carry with us, *ours*? Least of all; our Bleis'd Master (b) gives them their proper Name and Contemplation, *that which is another Man's*. Not only the Money, and the Moveables, but the Lands now in yours, have had various Owners before you, and will be in God knows how many Hands after you: so much rather are they in any lasting Sense, the Things of *others*, than of our Persons; and consequently those only are in Truth *ours*, which we can, after we have taken the Pains to acquire them, remove with us into another World. Neither is it any Misfortune, in the least, that the other are so Temporal and Unconstant; or that meaner half of us, which answers to them, is so likewise; But rather the good ordering of God, Who has made all, that is not Vanity and Vexation of Spirit here below, to be the Things that belong to Himself, and to our very Happiness, and to the World without End which is with him; and consequently the *Things* properly ours. Easily attainable, and to be made sure of; and therefore propounded to us: Eternal in themselves; and therefore satisfying and suitable, as they march the *Person* of us that never dies, as they are Parallel to that *Man* of us, who began his Race for Eternity ever since he came out of his Maker's Hands; who out-lives this vanishing World, and puts off this Temporary Body to assume it hereafter in better Conditions, like the Angels. 'Tis worthy indeed of God to let our Pulse beat its travelling March to the Eternal Joys of those Victorious Crowns; to which the Labours, the Hopes, the Attainments of all the Things that perisheth are not to be compar'd. For consider them.

I. NOW in their Turn *first as Pursu'd*. The Cares of that Sort bring neither Head-ach, Fever, or Consumption, with them. But are most friendly to health, serene and calm, and the good Conscience of them inspirits the Bosom with a sincere Alacrity. Here is no Jealousy of Rivals; here is no breaking the Rest by Night. And what crowns all, for a reasonable Service they are put into our Power; and the Wages of the lightsom Work is both of Weight, and worth

(a) Eccl. vii. 4.

(b) Luke xvi. 12.

worth Celestial and inconceivable. Is it your laudable enterprise to encrease Your *Gains above*? Go on; and be doing good, read the Volume of the Book where the *Charter* is (the whole Scheme is Truth) plain in its Conditions, and in the *Power of its Dividends*. To this, and to God, and to the Things above let every Christian Soul resort, and fix itself, whether it has been baffled, or prosper'd by the Things that are seen.

1. If baffled; the best Comfort is, you may be still the greatest Gainers by your very losing; thro' a good Management of changing all Sighs for this fickle World, into the more ardent Breathings after the Joys and the Treasures of Heaven. It must be your own Fault (which would, by your own Folly, eternalize Sorrow and Grief) if you make not this the very immediate Rise to the greatest and surest of all Gains; by withdrawing your Affections from fantastic Good and Greatness, where they have been too conversant; to settle them more and more upon the main Riches of all; which courts you all the Day long with Profit incomparably greater with an improving Fund, never to Disappoint; of every Joy, of every Store that is good for us; that will never bankrupt, never waste by dividing. The Disappointed of any Sort have the less reason to be disquieted within them, seeing the eternal Things they are invited to take Refuge in, are exceedingly better, than what, being repuls'd, you have retreated from; nay, than what you could possibly have succeeded in, in the other, had you never known any thing but Rejoycing concerning them. Let Religion now in this your Day of Consideration, take such an abiding Hold of your Heart and Affections, as never more to predominate to this World,— If it is God's Goodness so to confuse your Love of this World, let it be confused.

2. If prosper'd; still there is no Way to sanctify the whole, or realize any Part of the Wealth you have acquir'd by the Old, or the New Methods of Increase, but as it is enjoy'd and dispens'd with a Conscience towards Heavenly Treasure, and in reference to the securing that; by all the Conditions of Relief and good Works, as your Ability, in Conjunction with your Opportunities many, can answer: Not forgetting *some* of the many, who are *partly* wretched and undone, by
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what you have newly got. Think how equitably they deserve back some Assistance from their *late* own.

II. CONSIDER them as *Possess'd*.—No Calamity in Fortune from any sort of Spoil, nor Disaster in Body from the worst Peril of all, that of the *Pestilence* itself, can approach to hurt or diminish him, who places his Treasure, and the Salvation of all his Goods in the Things that are Eternal with GOD. They can do him no worse Service, than to brighten his Prospect, and accelerate his Joys. For his Happiness has not its Hold on what he must one Day bid a final Farewell to; Things of no more Stay for Man that is born of a Woman to lean on, than the frail Spider's Web, which hath such a great deal of Labour and Contrivance, but no Strength no Stability in it. But his Heart and his Hold are upon the Things that he is going to for evermore. And at the great Consummation, when the Distinction of these poor great Things shall dissolve promiscuous, the *Courts of Princes*, with *Cottages*; *White-Seaves*, and *Garters* with *ragged Sinners*, and no more Dignity in them; he, happy Man! shall rise up in Triumph above these Ruins. And when the *Books* shall open, not what one has *Transferr'd* to another by Brother-hurting *Contracts* (GOD forgive them!) but how much it has been our Care to transferr from Earth to Heaven, by doing Good to our Brother; he will have the Face to look up to his LORD, and his LORD will with Joy look down upon him, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

FROM that Day and Hour, how plainly does it appear, that it should not be, so very much as it has been, the Affair of *Christians* to get as much of this World, as can be got; to the valuing ourselves the more upon the Acquisition, and to the contemning of others that want? But to be studious and projectful, in all our Gettings, to secure what only has no Precariousness either in the Pursuit, or the Possession. What is thy Name, thou inordinate Desire after this World, that forgettest better Things, delighting thyself so much either in a vain Pursuit, or in a vain Possession? Is it Wealthy Ambition in any of its Shapes? Or is it FOLLY? — What is thy End *Religion*, thou Fear of GOD, and Love of Things Above? It is (if we have any Credence in the *Bible*) the succeeding
without

without Failure, and to our Heart's Desire, and beyond our present Measure, and that for evermore. Thy Pursuit therefore is only *Wisdom*, and thy Possession *pure Happiness*. Thank we God for making the Things that are seen such a Miscellany of Vexation, in order to make us love them less, and Himself more? Blessed be his Name, and his Son's Name, that Eternal Things are made so firm to us, and so good for us! We will therefore seek, have, or hold these Things only as in *Copy-hold* to Things Eternal; we will use this World so as not to abuse it by doing any faulty Thing for the Sake of it, since it so strangely passeth away, by what we have *known*, and by what we *expect*. *Whilst he that doth the Will of God, abideth for ever.*

ARE ye ready now to say, in Conclusion, That God in his Wisdom has verily made earthly Things empty? Then will I say the Truth of you also, That He has purposely, in the same Wisdom, made your *Heads otherwise*; having fill'd you with good Reason, to give serious Heed to this Christian Philosophy; to consider, to reflect often, and proportion always your Thoughts, your Cares, your Affections by a rational Estimate, in the comparative Judgment of the true Worth of the Things that are seen, and those that are not. God grant, that while we live here, and ought not to forego all Care of this World, that this Sovereign Prudence for the right ordering and distinguishing it, in a good Conscience of the Eternal Things that await us all, may never forsake any of us, in any of our Actions; for his Sake, who open'd the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers, JESUS CHRIST;

To're Whom, and to Whom, in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd to the Father Almighty, all Use of this World, all Praise in all the Churches, and all Submission in every one of us, henceforth and for Ever.

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